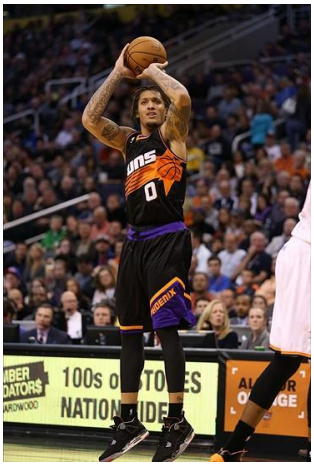
THE ELBOW-OUT-STROKESNAP JUMP SHOT:
GOOD START, MIXED RESULTS

By Robert Tilitz

The elbow-out-strokesnap jump shot mixes the whole-body elbow-out jump shot's shooting position and the elbow-in-strokesnap jump shot's release. The elbow-out-strokesnap jump shot starts off athletic and powerful because the elbow-out shooting position rolls the shooting shoulder back. But problems can materialize once the strokesnap release starts. If the elbow-out-strokesnap release functionally separates from the shooting shoulder, then it becomes weak and difficult to control, like an elbow-in-strokesnap release. If the shooting shoulder connection is maintained, see Michael Beasley and T.J. Warren, then significant power is obtainable along with a degree of square-in-the-air athleticism. Reliance on the wrist snap is always problematic. Without brushing hand action fine-tuning distance and direction, generating backspin for touch, slowing velocity and adding secondary power when needed are lost.



Michael Beasley

T.J. Warren

The physicality of the elbow-out-strokesnap jump shot derives from its close-in-front, forehead-high elbow-out shooting position that sets up back within the scope of the body. The setup of the elbow-out shooting position rolls the shooting shoulder back. But the rollback does not guarantee shooting-shoulder-centric whole-body athleticism and whole-body power. The problem is that focus on or commitment to the strokesnap release prevents the shooting shoulder from activating as a source of athleticism and power by way of engagement with the release mechanism. Without the shooting shoulder's involvement, it's partial whole-body athleticism and partial whole-body power. When the elbow-out-strokesnap jump shot's strokesnap release excludes the shooting shoulder that means there will be no forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release. The elbow-out strokesnap jump shot gets good, though not whole-body, athleticism and power from the close-in-front elbow-out shooting position because it encourages a full extension of the shooting arm including a stretched-out forearm stroke. But the reliance on a wrist snap precludes brushing hand action, which deprives the elbow-out-strokesnap jump shot of the single most effective control technique.

There are more reasons that the elbow-out shooting position brings athleticism to the elbow-out-strokesnap jump shot. One is that the close-in-front, forehead-high elbow-out shooting position streamlines the shooting position by locating back within the scope of the body. Another is that the early preparatory stage of the elbow-out shooting position approximates a natural jumping posture, certainly much more so than that of the out-front elbow-in shooting position. Still

another is the arm action that raises the basketball to the close-in-front, forehead-high elbow-out shooting position, which does double duty by also helping to power the jump of the jump shot.

Despite good athleticism and good power even without forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release, the elbow-out-strokesnap jump shot lacks significant strongside pull-up capability. That's because little to no forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release limits the rotation of the square-in-the-air jump that many strongside jump shots require and all could use. Resulting limits on strongside pull-up capability cost the ability to attack with the jump shot, which in turn removes the catalyst for the strongside game's complementary shooting, driving and passing options.

Jimmy Butler

Jimmy Butler's elbow-out jump shot is athletic and powerful but inconsistent because he often strokesnaps the release. When he excludes the shooting shoulder from the release, Butler does not shoot a free-flowing jump shot. The forward rotation of the shooting shoulder during the release is necessary both for direct power and to merge the jump of the jump shot and the release of the jump shot by channeling the athleticism and the power of the jump into the release. In addition, Butler's tendency to strokesnap the release excludes brushing hand action, which costs major control capabilities, including fine-tuning distance and direction, generating backspin for touch, slowing velocity and adding secondary power when needed. Butler's performance during the 2023 NBA Finals reflected those shortcomings. And Butler appeared to know it. How else to explain Butler frequently turning down well-earned opportunities to shoot mid-range and post-up jump shots?

Damian Lillard's jump shot does not fit into the elbow-out-strokesnap category snugly. For example, his extremely long-range 3-point semi-jump shot makes are probably powered in part by his shooting shoulder and his 3-point shots appear to be a shining example of brushing hand action concluding the release. But Lillard suffers elbow-out-strokesnap problems when he shifts to point guard mode. To dominate as an attacking point guard, Lillard needs to shoot penetration pull-ups with vertical athleticism. But Lillard's elbow-out release appears stuck on long-range power, seldom converting to mid-range athleticism. If Lillard were to access elbow-out mid-range athleticism, he could diversify his game and possibly win more. To be fair, playing point guard may have more to do with Lillard's losing than his shot selection. If Lillard was a two guard, his awesome long-range and driving game would be first-rate. But it is not a winning formula for a point guard to run their team's offense thirty feet from the basket.

Damian Lillard